



Cathy McMorris

7th District State Representative

2004 Session in Review

Rep. Cathy McMorris

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Serving citizens in...

- Ferry
- Lincoln
- Okanogan
- Pend Oreille
- Spokane and
- Stevens counties

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

After serving five terms as your 7th District legislator, the 2004 legislative session was my last in Olympia. It was a session of ups and down, hard-won victories and, in the end, a long list of issues the Legislature still needs to address.

This year we made some **positive changes to our state's business climate**, which will result in more and higher-paying jobs for our state's families. I am particularly pleased about the passage of legislation, including several bills I sponsored, that will have a **direct, positive impact on the people of Washington**.

It has truly been an honor to serve you in Olympia. Now that I am back in the district, if you have any questions, want to talk about legislative issues, or need helping working with a state agency, I welcome you to contact me anytime. **Thank you for this opportunity to serve you.**

Sincerely,

Cathy McMorris
State Representative

Building a better business climate

One of my highest priorities this year was changing the over-reaching nature of our state agencies. One of those is Labor and Industries, which runs our workers' compensation system. Employers often tell me they are frustrated with this program, including one who said, "...L&I presents a most serious threat to the prosperity of business in this state."

I introduced a bill this year to overhaul workers' compensation, including limiting attorney fees collected in L&I cases. I also sponsored legislation to strike at the heart of why and how state agencies over-reach their rulemaking authority and squeeze employers to the point of cutting jobs. My bill would have stopped agencies from using rules to promote a personal and institutional agenda, rather than what's best for employers, our economy and Washington families. While House Democrats stopped both bills, I will keep pushing for these changes.

The Legislature did pass a few bills that will help employers, including a House Republican measure that will allow citizens to file cases against the state in Yakima, Spokane, Whatcom or Thurston counties – rather than just in Thurston County, as is now required.



Legislation important to the 7th District

Creating jobs and helping kids

The Legislature passed several bills this year that will have a direct, positive impact on citizens in Northeastern Washington. One is a bill I introduced that continues a program funding **rural public safety and job-creation projects**. Many of our rural communities have used this program to buy life-saving safety equipment, such as the "jaws of life," and take on projects that promote jobs, like making land "pad-ready" for future employers.

We will also benefit from a bill that continues an incentive for **high technology businesses to locate and grow in rural areas**. And our students will get help from a bill that makes the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) testing process more clear and flexible.



Helping our agricultural and natural resource communities

The Legislature passed bills to help ranchers, farmers, orchardists and those who work with our natural resources. One was a bill I co-sponsored to make permanent a pilot project started five years ago creating a **limit use pesticide license**, with a smaller fee, to help farmers wanting to control weeds. Other bills will help ranchers affected by the mad cow scare, including one to start Washington on the path to join a federal “cradle-to-grave” **animal identification and tracking system**.

This year Sen. Morton and I introduced similar bills (Sen. Morton’s passed) to develop cooperative agreements between the state and federal governments and private landowners to help us **control wildfires, insects and diseases harming our forests**.

We also passed a bill to **require L&I to pay all costs** associated with the blood testing of field workers for cholinesterase and another — sponsored by Sen. Morton and guided through the House by Rep. Sump — that creates a 3-year pilot program to study cougar behavior and use hunting hound dogs to **control the cougar population** in Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille, Chelan, and Okanogan counties.

A change to Washington’s primary election



Last year the Supreme Court declared Washington’s blanket primary election unconstitutional, leaving the Legislature to choose a new primary. Our main goals were **protecting voters’ choice, privacy and independence**. The plan that passed advanced the top two primary vote getters to the general election – regardless of party. The bill also had back-up language for a second choice, a **Montana-style primary**, where voters don’t have to register with a party and can confidentially pick a single party’s ballot. The Governor vetoed the “Top Two” idea and chose the Montana-style primary for Washington.

Tort reform: why it’s so critical

Did you know **Lincoln Hospital has stopped delivering babies** and some doctors in Republic, Davenport and Chewelah **no longer deliver babies or provide prenatal care**? That’s forcing families to drive to Spokane for deliveries, posing a very real danger to mother and baby.

Doctors and hospitals are dropping these services because obstetrics insurance coverage has become too expensive. Runaway “pain and suffering” awards are forcing up rates for *all* medical providers – even those with no claims. Even without deliveries, Lincoln Hospital’s premium shot up 75 percent last year to \$71,000. This year it’s up to \$139,500, threatening care for the whole community.

This year House Republicans introduced bills to stop this dangerous trend, including a proposal to put a reasonable limit on pain and suffering awards. ***None of our proposals would have limited a person’s ability to sue or the amount they could collect for medical costs, costs related to care, or future wages with raises.*** Unfortunately, House Democrats, with help from the state’s trial lawyers, stopped any such measures before the House could vote on them. Instead, they proposed incremental measures that fell far short of the bold changes we need, and in the end the Legislature approved little that will get us out of this crisis.

If this issue has touched you personally, I encourage you to get involved, especially next session, and tell your legislators they simply must pass bold tort reform measures.

Inviting Veterans to share their stories!

Are you an American combat veteran or a civilian who supported them? Then we want to hear from you! I am serving as Washington team leader for the “Heart to Heart” program, an effort to **record veterans’ stories and experiences** for presentation to the Library of Congress and safekeeping for future American generations. If you are willing to share your story or would like to help record the sessions, please contact my office at (509) 276-1236. It is an honor to serve as state team leader for this project. It will live beyond all of us, and is one of the most important gifts we can give future generations of Americans.

Rep. McMorris meets with (l-r) veterans Colonel Keith Shuerman, Lauren Schwisow and Jim Monk.

Inside:

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